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XXXVIII.—*On the Birds of Montserrat.* By T. GRISDALE.

(Plate XIII.)

IN the course of a delightful three months' holiday spent during the early part of last year in visiting some of the Lesser Antilles, I passed the month of February in the luxuriant and pleasant little island of Montserrat. I resided at "The Cot," 1200 feet above the sea, noted as one of the most picturesquely situated abodes in the West Indies, on the verge of the high woods or primæval forest, and surrounded by deep wooded ravines watered by mountain-streams. I had thus a favourable opportunity for observing the birds, which exist there in great abundance; and had I been in a position to secure specimens of any thing like all I saw, I have no doubt I should have added very considerably to the number of known species (seventeen only) which the collections of the late Mr. Sturge have enabled Mr. Sclater to record as inhabitants of Montserrat (P. Z. S. 1879, p. 764).

Unfortunately, however, I was unable during my stay in the island to obtain any ammunition suitable for my purpose,

and, after literally annihilating some of the Humming-birds and other small birds with the coarse shot which only could be procured, I was constrained to turn my attention to a great extent in other directions, and the only birds of Montserrat of which I brought home specimens, or of which specimens passed through my hands, were of the following fourteen species:—

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| *1. <i>Cinlocerthia ruficauda</i> . | *8. <i>Orthorhynchus exilis</i> . |
| 2. <i>Certhiola dominicana</i> . | 9. <i>Ceryle alcyon</i> . |
| 3. <i>Loxigilla noctis</i> . | 10. <i>Coccyzus minor</i> . |
| *4. <i>Icterus oberi</i> . | *11. <i>Tinnunculus caribbæarum</i> . |
| 5. <i>Elainea martinica</i> . | 12. <i>Zenaida martinicana</i> . |
| *6. <i>Eulampis jugularis</i> . | 13. <i>Geotrygon</i> , sp. inc. |
| *7. <i>Eulampis holosericeus</i> . | *14. <i>Anous stolidus</i> . |

The species marked * are not included in the list prepared by Mr. Selater from Mr. Sturge's collections; and one of them is a new species, having been named *Icterus oberi* by Mr. Lawrence, of New York, subsequently to my visit to Montserrat.

I subjoin a few notes on the fourteen species above named:—

1. CINCLOCERTHIA RUFICAUDA.

I can say but little as to the habits or haunts of this bird. So far as I know, the only specimen I saw was the one I shot, in the deep shade of a thick copse on the verge of the primæval forest, at an elevation of about 1200 feet.

2. CERTHIOLA DOMINICANA. Yellow-breasted Sparrow.

This species is exceedingly numerous among the lime-trees which clothe the green slopes of the hills. Along with another somewhat similar species, which I did not obtain (called by my friends a "false Canary," from its yellow colour), the Red-throated Black Sparrow (*Loxigilla noctis*), and the Emerald-crest Humming-bird (*Orthorhynchus exilis*), it literally swarms among the flowers and fruit of the limes, and adds greatly to the interest of a stroll through the beautiful lime-plantations.

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Hand-colored

TITRUS CERI

3. *LOXIGILLA NOCTIS*. Black Sparrow.

The remarks which I have made on *Certhiola dominicana* apply also to this species, with the exception that it appeared to be a little shyer than the *Certhiola*.

4. *ICTERUS OBERI*. (Plate XIII.)

Icterus oberi, Lawr. Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus. vol. iii. p. 351 (1880).

This species is the *rara avis* of my small collection from Montserrat; and I may therefore perhaps be excused for entering a little into details respecting it.

Mr. Ober, on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, had paid a brief visit to Montserrat two or three months before I arrived there, and in company with the Rev. R. H. Holme, the Rector, had ascended Chaunces Mountain, the highest peak in the island, in search of an "Oriole" which he expected to find there; the search, however, proved unsuccessful. On my making the acquaintance of the Rector, who was devoting himself to the study of the ferns, of which he has collected 109 species in Montserrat, he proposed to me that we should make another ascent up the mountain, in the hope that we might be more successful than he and Mr. Ober had been; and this we did, accompanied by two of the Rector's pupils and a Negro guide, on the 19th February.

It would be out of place for me to repeat in the pages of 'The Ibis' the vain attempt which has so frequently been made to describe the luxuriant vegetation and the picturesque scenery which unfolds itself in the course of an ascent of a tropical mountain.

I shall therefore omit all detail as to this and as to the "uncanny" and "bottomless" pond near the summit of the mountain, 3000 feet high (in which we ventured to bathe, to the horror of our so-called guide), and confine myself as closely as possible to recording the circumstances under which we secured our two specimens of the Montserrat *Icterus*. About 1500 or 2000 feet up the mountain, where the luxuriant vegetation through which we had cut our way was beginning to be replaced by the colder and more severe aspect of the mountain-palms, festooned with grasses and filmy ferns, and the atmosphere was becoming unpleasantly

humid, the Rector remarked that we had now reached the elevation at which the bird was expected to be found. He at once commenced operations by placing two of his fingers to his lips and calling the birds, a process which he had learned from Mr. Ober, and which was taken up when he was tired by each of his pupils in succession.

The continued repetition of this call without result was becoming ludicrous, rather than monotonous, when at last, from the depths of the forest, a faint response was heard, which, coming nearer and nearer as our calls were repeated, at last appeared to proceed from the thick foliage high overhead. Careful inspection now revealed the dim outline of a bird, and I lost no time in firing a shot.

Whether it was owing to my defective aim, or whether the bird lodged in the thick foliage above, or was hidden among the tangled vegetation below, it is impossible to say; but the most careful search by the whole of the party failed to reveal any trace of the stranger. A few hundred feet further on we repeated our experiment, and, after another trial of our patience, obtained a response as before. This time I handed my gun to Mr. Holme; and the result of the first shot was repeated, the only satisfaction derived from this second essay being the assurance of the Rector that the bird at which he had shot was an Oriole, and not a common one.

A further stroll upward was followed by a third attempt, in the carrying out of which I took my gun and brought down the bird, which was immediately secured by our young companions.

Soon afterwards we once again repeated the operation; and this time the Rector was as successful as I had been. Our subsequent repetitions of the call, both in ascending and descending the mountain, failed to elicit the desired response; but my friend and I were both perfectly satisfied with having secured two specimens of what we believed to be a new bird.

It was on my return to Barbadoes, at the end of March, from a visit to Trinidad and Demerara, that I found a letter from Mr. Holme, in which he told me that he had heard from Mr. Ober that the bird he had been in search of on Chauces Mountain was a new species, and that it had been named by

Mr. Lawrence *Icterus oberi* (See Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus. iii. p. 351).

5. ELAINEA MARTINICA.

I know little of the habits of this bird. My specimen was shot near the Cot, in the same locality and on the same day as *Cinclocerthia ruficauda*; and I believe I frequently saw it elsewhere.

6. EULAMPIS JUGULARIS. Ruby-throat Humming-bird.

This species is nowhere by any means common; and yet I observed it occasionally in suitable situations on the slopes of the mountain-ravines and on the skirts of the high woods in nearly every part of the island which I visited, but never at less than 1000 feet elevation. Its existence was scarcely known to the planters and officials of the island, to whom the Emerald-crest (*Orthorhynchus exilis*) and the common Long-billed Humming-bird (*Eulampis holosericeus*) were as familiar as Sparrows are to us.

The first bird I shot in the West Indies was a beautiful example of *Eulampis jugularis*, which I saw displaying its dazzling ruby breast and metallic-green wings at the white flowers of a beautiful tree growing on the slope of a ravine known as the Banana Gut, facing the sea, and within sight of a magnificent view of the neighbouring islands of Nevis and Redonda, the most charming spot, I think, that it has ever been my lot to see. I saw the bird fall; but it was some time before I discovered it, lodged between the leaf-stalk and the stem of one of the stately and beautiful bananas with which the accessible parts of the ravine or gut were planted.

7. EULAMPIS HOLOSERICEUS. Long-billed Humming-bird.

This species is very common in the gardens and among the flowering shrubs throughout the island, in company with the little Emerald-crest (*Orthorhynchus exilis*).

I obtained two or three mutilated specimens of the bird, but did not preserve them, imagining that I should meet with the same species in Trinidad.

Mr. Holme and I identified it beyond doubt, by reference to authorities, as *Eulampis holosericeus*.

8. ORTHORHYNCHUS EXILIS. Emerald-crest Humming-bird.

This brilliant little feathered gem is to be found everywhere in Montserrat, save towards the summits of the higher peaks ; but nowhere did I see it in such profusion as among the gay tropical flowers which adorned the garden of the Cot.

There, in company with its larger green kinsman, *Eulampis holosericeus*, and a wonderful variety of "Sparrows," butterflies, and bees, it was to be seen whenever the sun was shining (and that during my stay in Montserrat was nearly always from sunrise to sunset), sometimes darting from flower to flower with the most extraordinary vivacity, sometimes contending in the air with others of its species in the most warlike fashion, and sometimes poised over the tubular flowers of the *Hibiscus* or the *Alamanda*, its crest erect and its wings quivering with inconceivable rapidity, a perfect image of life and enjoyment.

If the variations in the colour of the crest of this bird be a sufficient reason for classifying it under two or three distinct species, there can be no doubt that the Montserrat bird is *O. exilis*, its crest being entirely of the emerald tint, with scarcely a suspicion of blue in the tip.

On one occasion I took home with me to the Cot from a neighbouring slope among the lime-plantations an enormous side spike of the American Agave, covered with yellow bloom.

On my way the Emerald-crests buzzed around me like hornets, making an occasional dash at the bloom I carried in my hand ; and they continued their operations for the remainder of the day on the balcony of the Cot, where the spike was placed in water.

9. CERYLE ALCYON. Kingfisher.

I saw this bird frequently flitting along the streams which run along the bottoms of the ravines ; but I was never able to obtain a specimen myself. The one I brought home with me was shot by Dr. Pilkington, then one of the medical officers of the island, and who took an interest in its ornithology.

10. *COC CYZUS MINOR*. Quaking Bird.

Wherever I went I heard the peculiar and unmistakable cry of this elegant-looking bird proceeding from the wild guavas and other tall shrubs on the partially cleared slopes of the mountains, the wooded ravines, and the verge of the primæval woods. It is by no means a shy bird; on the contrary, when disturbed it generally exhibits itself as a target in some conspicuous position, such as the topmost branch of one of the shrubs. My own researches in Montserrat were confined principally to the mountains, of which, indeed, the island almost entirely consists; and I do not know whether the Quaking Bird is equally common on the sparse lowlands near the sea.

11. *TINNUNCULUS CARIBBÆARUM*. Sparrow-Hawk or Killie-Hawk.

This species closely resembles our own familiar Kestrel, and forms one of the most conspicuous features in the bird-life of Montserrat. Wherever one strolled on the slopes of the mountains, or on the low ground near the sea, two or three of these birds were in sight, hovering overhead; and they would occasionally come down with a swoop and alight in the most audacious manner, as if unable to control their curiosity, in a conspicuous position on the nearest tree.

On one occasion, when staying for the night at Richmond, not far from the shore, I fired at two of these Hawks which were engaged in mortal combat overhead, and, bringing them both down, found that while one was killed the other was quite uninjured, but had its claws so firmly fixed in the flesh of its antagonist that it was unable to make its escape.

The incident reminded me of another, which occurred in Cumberland many years before, while I was feeding a Kestrel very similar to this.

The bird cast its eye upwards, uttering a peculiar cry; and following the direction of its vision, I saw a mere speck against the sky, another Hawk hovering overhead. Thinking for a moment of the wonderful power, whether of vision or instinct, which enabled my captive to recognize its kinsman at such

an immense distance, I continued to watch it feeding, when all at once I heard a heavy thud on the ground close behind my heels, and turning round found another Kestrel, stunned and helpless. I at once secured the new comer; and it lived in partial captivity for some time afterwards. I remember looking up for the speck in the sky and finding that it was gone.

There is a considerable variety in the plumage of the specimens I procured of the Montserrat Kestrel; but I am assured by those best capable of forming an opinion, that the variations are only indications of sex and age.

12. *ZENAIDA MARTINICANA*. Mountain-Dove.

Everybody in Montserrat knows this species, which comes down in large numbers from the mountains in the early morning to feed in the lime-plantations on the slopes. I continually disturbed them in my morning strolls near the Cot, when they flew for a short distance, to alight out of my sight behind the next lime-trees.

Mr. Holme had several of these birds living and thriving in captivity.

13. *GEOTRYGON* sp. inc. Ground-Dove.

This species, like the last, was exceedingly numerous, and especially so on the lower slopes near the sea. It is about the size of a Quail, and its flight is very short and low. Once or twice I had living specimens in my possession; but I was obliged to reject them as travelling companions in my further journey through the West Indies.

I have referred here specially to only two kinds of Dove, because they only came directly under my observation; but it was impossible to explore the high woods in Montserrat without being aware of the existence of a larger species than either of these. This species, I was told, was the Blue Pigeon or Ramier (*Columba corensis*), specimens of which were included in the collection sent by Mr. Sturge to Mr. Selater.

The negro Assu, of the Cacao Gut (a beautiful ravine close to the Cot), gave me a graphic description on the spot of the assembling and cooing of the various species of Pigeons and

Doves among the trees of his ravine ; but that takes place in the breeding-season, and I was not there to witness it.

14. *ANOUS STOLIDUS.*

The specimen of this bird which I brought home was shot by Mr. Holme ; and I understood that the species was common on the coast ; but I know nothing of its habits.

In the foregoing remarks, which I hope may be of some interest to the readers of 'The Ibis,' I have commented only on those species of birds of which I obtained specimens, or regarding which I made notes at the time which settle the question of their identity ; but I ought to add that I believe I saw during my brief stay in Montserrat most, if not all, of the remaining birds contained in the collections made by Mr. Sturge. I am convinced, too, that the small collections made by that gentleman and myself, representing together only twenty-one species, do not convey any idea of the variety of birds which are to be found in Montserrat.

I must not conclude without acknowledging the obligations I am under to Mr. Selater (who is, indeed, the originator of this paper) for the interest he has taken in the subject, and the information he has so freely afforded me regarding the nomenclature of the birds.

XXXIX.—*Notes on the Avifauna of New Caledonia. A Catalogue of the Birds of the Island known to E. L. & E. L. C. LAYARD. With Remarks by the Rev. Canon TRISTRAM.*

FIVE years and a half having now passed away since we first arrived in the island and took up the study of the birds of New Caledonia, we think the time is fairly come when we may consider ourselves entitled to speak authoritatively on the subject. We have waited till we could personally visit the mountain-range of the interior and the more northern parts to ascertain what birds inhabited those regions. E. L. L. has made two visits to the neighbourhood of the forest mountain-range on the west coast ; and though he has been obliged